

A MYSTIC IN THE AGE OF THE INQUISITION:
BERNARDINO DE LAREDO'S *CONVERSO* ENVIRONMENT
AND CHRISTOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY*

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The spirituality of the Spanish Golden Age is a study in contrasts. It is perhaps surprising that the same country and era would implement an extensive juridical tool for curbing heterodoxy (the Inquisition) while at the same time providing the environment for the development of early modern mysticism seen in the works of Ignacio de Loyola, Teresa de Avila, and Juan de la Cruz. Less astonishing is that these two extremes, while coexisting, did not do so peacefully. In fact, most sixteenth-century Castilian mystics either appeared before the Inquisitorial courts¹ or had their writings proscribed by inquisitors in the Spanish *Indices de libros prohibidos* (Indices of Prohibited Books) updated at regular intervals after 1559.²

While it is true that mystics posed a potential problem for inquisitors due to their originality and individuality in the practice of Christian devotion, most of the mystics who were denounced during the Inquisition received official scrutiny based on their status as *conversos* or New

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¹ Luis de León, Juan de Avila, and Teresa de Avila, to name just a few. For a complete list of the Golden Age mystics who were tried by the Inquisition, see the review in José-Carlos Gómez-Menor, "Linaje judío de escritores religiosos y místicos españoles del siglo XVI," in *Judíos, Sefarditas, Conversos: La expulsión de 1492 y sus consecuencias* (Valladolid: Ámbito, 1995), 587-600.

² The indices of prohibited and expurgated books produced in Spain post-1559 not only duplicated the indices published in Rome but also expanded them to include more proscriptions of Castilian authors who wrote in the vernacular, including many Castilian mystics. See the eleven volumes of *Index des livres interdits*, ed. J. M. Bujanda (Geneva: Droz, 1984-2002).

Christians—that is, as the descendents of converted Jews. This fact has generated a subcategory of scholarship that seeks to prove the *converso* genealogy of particular (and particularly famous) mystics, either by locating documented evidence as evidence of the mystic's family background³ or by demonstrating the ways that Jewish belief can be adduced from the best-known mystical treatises of the Golden Age.⁴ This approach in turn draws on the debate within modern scholarship over the religious affiliation of the *conversos* in general: whether converts retained covert links to their religious heritage (the theory of the crypto-Jews) or whether they converted fully without any carryover of practice or belief.

In this article, I take a different approach to the question of Golden Age mystics, using as a case study Bernardino de Laredo (1482-1545?), the author of one of the first vernacular Castilian mystical treatises, a cofounder of the genre of *recogimiento* (recollection mysticism), and a known influence on Teresa de Avila. Laredo is unique among sixteenth-century Castilian mystics for neither coming before the Inquisition nor having his *Subida del Monte Sión* (Ascent of Mount Sion, 1535, 1538) banned or expurgated by the *Indices of Prohibited Books*.⁵ These facts are remarkable enough in themselves, yet still more so, given that it is possible to prove that Laredo's life choices would have led his fellow residents of

³ See Gómez-Menor, "Linaje judío," 587-600. For specific mystics and their heritage, frequently revealed through the inquiries of the Inquisition, see Angel Alcalá, *Proceso inquisitorial de Fray Luis de León* (Salamanca: Junta de Castilla y León, 1991), 675-99; Luis Sala Balust and Francisco Martín Hernández, "Biografía del Mtro. Juan de Avila," in *Obras completas del santo maestro Juan de Avila: Edición crítica, I* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1970), 19; and Enrique Llamas-Martínez, *Santa Teresa de Jesús y la Inquisición española* (Madrid: Academia de Doctores de Madrid, 1970), *passim*.

⁴ An example of attempting to prove Kabbalistic influence on Golden Age Christian mysticism is found in Catherine Swietlicki, *Spanish Christian Cabala: The Works of Luis de León, Santa Teresa de Jesús, and San Juan de la Cruz* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1986), *passim*.

⁵ For example, Francisco de Osuna and Bernabé de Palma, immediate contemporaries of Laredo who also articulated the method of recollection mysticism, both ended up in the *Indices*. Palma's *Via spiritus* was banned entirely in 1559, as was Osuna's *Gracioso convite*: Carlos Clavería, ed., *Arte de prohibir libros: Índice de libros prohibidos 1559* (Barcelona: Edicions Destres, 2001), 52, 65. Osuna's *Primer abecedario espiritual* was first expurgated in Antonii a Soto Maios, *Novissimus librorum prohibitorum et expurgandorum index pro Catholicis Hispaniarum Regnis, Philippi IV* (Madrid: Didacus Díaz, 1640), 862; and his *Segundo abecedario* in *Index librorum prohibitorum et expurgatorum*, by Bernardi de Sandoval et Roxas (Madrid: Ludovicum Sanchez, 1612), 45. See Alfredo Vilchez Díaz, *Autores y anónimos españoles en los índices inquisitoriales* (Madrid: Universidad Complutense, 1986), 82, for the complete list of *Indices* that expurgated Osuna's works.

Seville to identify him with the New Christian community, as I will demonstrate in the first part of this article.

Rather than using the possibility of Jewish heritage as reason to seek evidence of Jewish belief or Kabbalistic influence, I argue instead that an awareness of Laredo's problematic social status poses the question as to how he, among all mystics of the sixteenth century, managed to negotiate the difficult task of appearing sufficiently orthodox so as to avoid Inquisitorial suspicion, much less condemnation. In the prefatory material to the *Subida del Monte Sión*, Laredo provides an overview of his tripartite work which does not actually match the contents of his treatise. By examining the disjunctions between the preface and the core of Laredo's treatise, it becomes evident that, when framing the book, he had recourse to several rhetorical and political strategies to emphasize his full commitment to Christianity. These moves serve the double purpose of clarifying his status as *Christian*, over against *Jew*, despite his association with the converso community that was presumed to be always disposed toward Jewish practice, and as *mystic*, over against *heretic*, despite the ways his treatise is unique in the history of Western Christian mystical methods.

Ultimately, these rhetorical strategies aimed at his contemporaries not only led inquisitors to accept the unique mystical method of a possible *converso* as orthodox but have also misled modern scholars into perfunctorily dismissing the central element of Laredo's mystical technique. Laredo's choice to elevate Passion meditation to the second stage of a mystic way is in direct opposition to its traditional status as preliminary to a tripartite method of contemplation.⁶ I suggest that Laredo's emphasis on imaginative visualization of Christ's death functions in a wider context to problematize modern scholarly categories that take their cue from medieval biases that consistently relegate the genre of visual meditation to the level of beginner's spirituality, far below the intellectual ideal of abstract mystical contemplation used by "proficients" to achieve mystical union.

⁶ Bonaventure, likewise a Franciscan, famously formulated the purgative, illuminative, and contemplative ways in his *De triplici via* (Of the Three Ways). See the bilingual Spanish-Latin edition, "Las tres vías o incendio de amor," in *Obras de San Buenaventura: Edición bilingüe, IV*, ed. Bernardo Aperribay, Miguel Oromi, and Miguel Oltra, (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1963), 102-40.

*Guilt by Association: The "Converso Problem"⁷
in the Sixteenth Century*

Perhaps the most controversial issue at hand for all ranks of Spanish society in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was the status of converts from Judaism to Christianity. In what had formerly been a pluri-religious society, the odd interstitial category of *converso* was born in the wake of widespread pogroms in 1391, grew as a result of violent outbreaks against Jews in 1449 and 1471, and became the primary category of "other" in Iberia after the expulsion of the remaining Jews in 1492. The *conversos* had not only disassociated themselves from a religion that exposed them to attack or property loss but had also joined the official religion of the peninsula, a move that allowed them access to the advantages accorded to the majority—that is, greater freedom to practice a variety of trades, not to mention politics on a local and national level. The obvious practical benefits of conversion were of great concern to both Jews and "Old Christians" at the time, giving rise at the time to a rejection of the "New Christians" by Jews, on the one hand (as heretics or apostates),⁸ and by Old Christians, on the other (as false converts seeking security and social status).⁹ Over time, these concerns were extended to the descendents of converts, which resulted not only in the establishment of the Inquisition to seek out and quash heterodoxy among New Christians but also in the expulsion of the Jews in 1492 to prevent them from luring *conversos* back to Judaism.¹⁰

⁷ This phrase is taken from the title of a review of scholarship. Francisco Márquez Villanueva, "The *Converso* Problem: An Assessment," in *Collected Studies in Honour of Américo Castro's Eightieth Year* (Oxford: Lincombe Lodge Research Library, 1975), 317.

⁸ See Norman Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 4-6, for a discussion of how Jewish authorities viewed converts to Christianity as anything from heretic (*min*, or those who if they wished to return to Judaism would have to be reinducted into the faith through ritual immersion) to unwilling apostate (*mumar*, or those who had never truly left the faith), to forced convert (*anus*), to true convert (*meshumad*).

⁹ Starting in the late fourteenth century, Christians referred derogatorily to the *conversos* as *marranos* (term of unknown origin, often believed to be a play on the word "swine") or as *tornizados* (renegades). See Benzion Netanyahu, *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain*, 2nd ed. (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001), 1134-36. Netanyahu notes that the *conversos* were not accused of judaizing until several decades had passed after the 1391 mass conversions and that the claim did not become a common one until the mid-fifteenth century. Henry Kamen argues that it was in fact Inquisitorial pressure (and the specifics of the accusations) that led *conversos* to take up Jewish practices, rather than the reverse. *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997), 60.

¹⁰ See Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, *Los Reyes Católicos: La corona y la unidad de España*

The social upheaval that the Catholic Monarchs had tried to address by the Edict of Expulsion, however, was not resolved by the conversions and exile of the Jews or by the wholesale examination of *converso* belief and practice undertaken by the Inquisition in its first four decades. Instead, even as the Inquisition turned its attention to other forms of heterodoxy by 1520, discrimination based on the notion of “pure blood” (*limpieza de sangre*) was legalized in progressively more strata of Iberian society. Attempts to bar *conversos* from public office had had varying success since the early fifteenth century,¹¹ while many religious orders or their schools adopted rules prohibiting the entrance of *conversos* in the late 1400s.¹² Momentum for the passing of *limpieza* statutes grew in the first decades of the sixteenth century: the cathedral of Seville was one of the earliest churches to bar *conversos* from clerical positions (1515),¹³ while the 1525 *limpieza* statute of the Franciscan Order specified, among other points, that the General of the Order could not have had Jewish blood in his family for the previous four generations.¹⁴ As the number of religious, educational, and governmental institutions passing laws limiting *converso* participation multiplied, the “*converso* problem” became one of public perception, for it was potentially fatal for the reputation and livelihood of a family and its descendants to receive even the imputation of being New Christians. Over the course of the sixteenth century, it became so easy for individuals to start rumors about their enemies’ heritage, thereby stripping a family of its access to education, professional advancement, and governmental positions, that increasing

(Valencia: Asociación Francisco López de Gómara, 1989), 207; and Kamen, *Inquisition and Society in Spain in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985), 14.

¹¹ See Netanyahu, *Origins of the Inquisition*, 954ff.

¹² Albert A. Sicroff, *Les controverses des statuts de pureté de sang en Espagne du XV^e au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Librairie Marcel Didier, 1960), 89-90.

¹³ This was the first *limpieza* rule passed by a cathedral in Castile. On the other hand, it was also one of the loosest statutes, as it applied to the descendants of all people found guilty of heresy by the Inquisition. In other words, any New Christian who had been absolved or never tried was free to take a position in the cathedral, while the descendants of any Old Christian condemned as heretic would have been denied a job. Sicroff, *Les controverses des statuts*, 91.

¹⁴ Sicroff, *Les controverses des statuts*, 90-91. The prohibition on the entrance of *conversos* to the Colegio de San Ildefonso at the Universidad de Alcalá was also ratified in 1525. The Dominicans, likewise, seem to have made *limpieza* statutes official in the 1530s. *Ibid.*, 90. It is of interest that although the Franciscans had been among the first to call for *limpieza* statutes, the order was divided over its enactment. It was revoked for a short period of time in the 1560s. *Ibid.*, 153 n. 72.

numbers of Old Christians turned to the courts to request official validation of their genealogies.¹⁵

The question of the “true” religious affiliation of these converts and their descendents was not only a prominent polemic prior to the establishment of the Inquisition and throughout its existence but has also been of primary concern in modern academe. The debate has been conducted most frequently as one of extremes—all *conversos* were actually crypto-Jews seeking ways to remain in touch with their religious past (according to Yitzhak Baer and Heim Beinart), or all *conversos*, but especially their descendants, were fully and unproblematically Christian (Benzion Netanyahu and Norman Roth).¹⁶ Recently, however, historians of both Jewish and Christian practice on the peninsula have begun to indicate that *converso* faith and practice was in no way a monolithic construct. For example, Gretchen Starr-LeBeau marshals evidence from the 1480s Inquisition trials in Guadalupe to prove that *conversos* participated in daily Christian life on a similar continuum with Old Christians. That is to say, on any given Sunday, both New and Old Christians might be found anywhere from attending Mass to frequenting the local tavern.¹⁷ Focusing on the evidence of daily life and practice found in Inquisition documents, her study indicates gray areas in the extremist portrait of crypto-Jews versus perfect Christians. Likewise, David Gitlitz provides a “taxonomy” of four varieties of *converso* response after the 1492 conversions (fully Christian, fully crypto-Jewish, syncretic, and skeptical).¹⁸

¹⁵ Michael Crawford, “Honor or Financial Calculation: The Desire for Hidalgo Status in Sixteenth-Century Castile” (paper presented at the Society for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies, July 4, 2003).

¹⁶ For the crypto-Jews, see Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1978), passim; and Heim Beinart, *Conversos on Trial: The Inquisition in Ciudad Real* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1981), 286-92, where the author speaks only of the rejection of Christian theology and practice by the *conversos* in chapter 8. For the most passionate presentations of *conversos* as Christians, see Benzion Netanyahu, *The Marranos of Spain from the Late 14th to the Early 16th Century: According to Contemporary Hebrew Sources*, 3rd ed. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), passim; and Roth, *Conversos*, passim. Netanyahu makes this argument for the first generation of children raised by converts after the 1391 pogrom: “Intellectually, they were part of the Christian world, and saw no reason why they should not be part of the Christian society about them.” *Origins of the Inquisition*, 213.

¹⁷ Gretchen D. Starr-LeBeau, *In the Shadow of the Virgin: Inquisitors, Friars, and “Conversos” in Guadalupe, Spain* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 5, citing the work of I. S. Révah, Mark Meyerson, Pilar Huerga Criado, and Yirmiyahu Yovel.

¹⁸ David M. Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 82-91.

However, despite Starr-LeBeau's accurate observation that examining New Christians only in continuum with Jews does not allow us to explore their interactions with Old Christians and despite Gitlitz's recognition of the range of belief among the *converso* population in the first decades of the early modern period, both Starr-LeBeau's and Gitlitz's books focus on the techniques judaizing New Christians used to recover Jewish practices.¹⁹ Thus, even scholars who call for awareness of the complexity of *converso* religious belief and practice still reserve the thrust of their arguments for New Christian spirituality that was crypto-Jewish, rather than considering those New Christians who identified themselves as fully Christian but lived spiritual lives in a world that doubted their fitness as citizens and as religious persons. As a result, evidence from those New Christians who did *not* run afoul of the Inquisition has not been taken into sufficient account.

I argue that attention to texts produced post-expulsion by New Christians for the Christian faithful both old and new—rather than those produced by Old Christians for Old Christians or by New Christians for Old Christians worried about judaizers²⁰—allows us to explore a different set of questions than those posed by the camps of Baer and Netanyahu,

¹⁹ In contrast to her important point that “[t]he experiences of *conversos* living near the Virgin’s shrine in Guadalupe reveal the importance of considering to what extent New Christians saw themselves as Christians, rather than exclusively examining connections between *conversos* and Jews,” Starr-LeBeau focuses predominantly on possible Jewish practices as revealed by Inquisition documents. *Shadow of the Virgin*, 90-91. That is, immediately after mentioning that the primary focus of devotion for Old Christians in the late fifteenth century was the confraternities devoted to the Passion, Starr-LeBeau moves without transition to “alternate religious communities” started by *conversos*, stating that “[t]he first question, for many *conversos*, was how precisely to observe Jewish law.” *Ibid.*, 83. Likewise, her interest in the Jeronimite friars is confined primarily to those identified as judaizers. *Ibid.*, 205ff. Starr-LeBeau’s attention to the judaizing portion of the community may stem in part from Guadalupe’s unique history as being the only town to expel its *conversos*, not just its Jewish population. *Ibid.*, 237-39. In a similar manner, Gitlitz provides his four categories of *converso* belief in chapter 3 of his lengthy work, but focuses throughout the rest of the book on the beliefs and practices of only those in the category of crypto-Jews.

²⁰ Much attention has been paid to the political tracts of the fifteenth century by New and Old Christians that were either diatribes against *conversos* as turncoats or staunch defenses of them as sincere converts. See, among others, Netanyahu, *Origins of the Inquisition*, 351-627, 814-96; Roth, *Conversos*, chap. 6; and Bruce Rosenstock, *New Men: Conversos, Christian Theology, and Society in Fifteenth-Century Castile* (London: Department of Hispanic Studies, Queen Mary, University of London, 2002), *passim*. Some *conversos* remained passionately anti-Jewish into the early part of the sixteenth century; my interest lies in *conversos* who did not explicitly align themselves as Jewish or anti-Jewish, but rather as Christian.

and even mediating scholars such as Starr-LeBeau and Gitlitz. In particular, I propose that such documents enable us to investigate how New Christians navigated the complex circumstance of adhering to the Christian faith in a society that consistently, vocally, and often abusively made racial heritage the touchstone for the possibility of faith.

A Converso *Environment*

Bernardino de Laredo, a native of Seville, was born in 1482, one decade prior to the banishment of the Jews. He was best known during his lifetime as a doctor and apothecary whose curative powers were called on by local nobility, Spanish and Portuguese royalty, and the brothers of the tiny Franciscan convent/hermitage where he lived as a lay friar until his death in 1540 or 1545.²¹ He professed as a lay member in the Franciscan Order a mere five years before the Seville cathedral passed its *limpieza* statute in 1515,²² and began writing on spiritual rather than medical matters in the decade after the enactment of the 1525 Franciscan *limpieza* rule.²³ In 1535 Laredo published his *Subida del Monte Sión* (Seville, Juan Cromburger),²⁴ in which he traces the three stages of *recogimiento*,

²¹ Most scholars date his death to 1540 based on the standard chronicle account: Andrés de Guadalupe, *Historia de la Santa Provincia de Los Angeles*, ed. Antolín Abad Pérez, *Cronicas Franciscanas de España* (Madrid: Editorial Cisneros, 1994; originally published, 1622), 9:322, 39. That a “revised and updated” version of one of Laredo’s medical treatises appeared in 1542 casts doubt on the year of his death. The extensive and primarily hagiographical account in Guadalupe’s chronicle has served as the basis for various unfounded suppositions about Laredo’s life. Guadalupe, *Historia de la Santa Provincia de Los Angeles*, 322-38. See Fidèle de Ros, *Un inspireur de Sainte Thérèse: Le frère Bernardin de Laredo* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1948), chap. 1, for the first serious critique of the historical accuracy of Guadalupe’s account of Laredo; and Jessica A. Boon, “The Mystical Language of Recollection: Bernardino de Laredo and the *Subida del Monte Sión*” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania), chap. 1, for a discussion of the historical circumstances in which Laredo would have lived that we can ascertain, rather than the particulars of Laredo’s life that we cannot.

²² Ros refers to the internal evidence of Laredo claiming more than twenty years’ of experience in treating patients in his *Modus faciendi*, published in 1527, as indicating that he had started practicing at the latest by 1507. *Un inspireur de Sainte Thérèse*, 37 n. 1. That statement, along with Guadalupe’s statement that Laredo professed at the age of 28 (1510 if 1482 was the date of his birth) and spent thirty years as a lay friar, provides the only evidence for these dates. *Un inspireur de Sainte Thérèse*, 37 n. 1; Guadalupe, *Historia de la Santa Provincia de Los Angeles*, 324, 339.

²³ His medical publications were the first pharmaceutical treatises published in the Castilian vernacular: *Metaphora medicine* (Seville: Juan de Varela, 1522) and *Modus faciendi* (Seville: Jacobo Cromburger, 1527).

²⁴ I will be citing the first full modern edition of the *Subida*, which reproduces the

or “recollection mysticism” (usually designated as self-knowledge, meditation on the Passion, and “transformation of the soul into God through love”).²⁵ A radically revised version appeared in 1538 from the same publisher and reached five editions over the next century, making it one of the primary Castilian texts to influence the sixteenth-century flourishing of Spanish mysticism. Indeed, Laredo’s work was sufficiently well known to come to the attention of Teresa de Avila, who cited the *Subida* in particular as a main source for her formulation of a language of interior spirituality.²⁶

The brief sketch above includes the entirety of verifiable information about Laredo’s life and history that has been available to scholars until now. My own research indicates that Laredo may have been from New Christian stock, as I have delineated elsewhere.²⁷ I would argue, however, that it is more important to realize that Laredo would have been suspected by his compatriots to be a *converso* on the basis of what I term his “*converso* environment”—that is to say, his choice to take on a *converso* career in medicine, his acceptance of *converso* patients, and his interaction with *converso* theologians. An environment conducive to raising Inquisitorial suspicion is particularly relevant for assessing the history of

sixteenth-century spellings and vocabulary, has notes to the minor revisions applied to parts 1 and 2, and includes both the 1535 and the 1538 versions of part 3. All passages found here are my translations. Bernardino de Laredo, *Subida del Monte Sión*, ed. Alegría Alonso González, Mercedes García Trascasas, and Bertha Gutiérrez (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 2000). The one available English translation includes only the 1538 part 3 and is quite outdated: Laredo, *The Ascent of Mount Sion: Being the Third Book of the Treatise of that Name*, trans. E. Allison Peers (London: Faber and Faber, 1952).

²⁵ Melquíades Andrés, *Los recogidos: Nueva visión de la mística española 1500-1700* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1976), 89.

²⁶ “Looking through books to see if I could learn how to describe the prayer I had, I found in one, called *The Ascent of the Mount*, in the part which concerns the union of the soul with God, all the symptoms I had when I was unable to think of anything.” This is my revision of the translation in Teresa de Jesús, *The Life of Saint Teresa of Jesus: The Autobiography of Teresa of Avila*, trans. E. Allison Peers (New York: Image Books, 1991), 225. See also Teresa de Jesús, *Libro de la vida*, in *Obras completas*, ed. Efrén de la Madre de Dios and Otger Steggink (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2003), chap. 23, secs. 11-12, p. 129.

²⁷ Although no evidence exists about any member of Laredo’s nuclear family, I have found strong circumstantial evidence that Laredo’s niece came from a known *converso* family (also named Laredo), indicating Bernardino himself may very well have been a New Christian. See the detailed discussion in Boon, “Mystical Language of Recollection,” 93-98. It is worth noting that, although no proof has been offered concerning Laredo’s heritage by other scholars, two authors do assume him to be of *converso* background without further comment. See Gómez-Menor, “Linaje judío,” 591; and Bert Roest, *Franciscan Literature of Religious Instruction before the Council of Trent* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 437.

Sevillans of the 1520s for several reasons. For example, it is evident from Geraldine McKendrick's exploration of Laredo's contemporary, Juan de Varela, and his role in Seville's *converso* community (to which he had no proven genealogical ties but for which he became the spokesperson during the *comunero* riots of 1521),²⁸ that frequent association with *conversos* could link an individual inextricably to the *converso* community.²⁹ In addition, given the strong ties between Franciscans, *conversos*, the Illuminist heresy, and mystical practices that were the focus of a number of Inquisition trials in Seville between 1525 and 1535,³⁰ it would have been impossible for any individual to function in close connection to the *converso* community as a Franciscan and as a mystic without leading to Inquisitorial questions concerning orthodox belief and practice. Laredo's actual genealogy, lost to us without specific names for his parents, is thus less relevant to the thought and career of this Franciscan apothecary than is the fact that he was supported by a network of *conversos* in both his medical practice and his spiritual concerns, as I detail here.

Laredo exercised his twin professions of medicine and mysticism in primarily *converso* settings. Most obviously, Laredo chose to become a doctor, a profession so closely linked with the *converso* population subsequent to 1492 that many Old Christians refused to enter it, so as to not live under a cloud of suspicion about their origins.³¹ Of the patients

²⁸ These riots were local revolts against Charles V in towns across Castile, 1520-21. See Stephen H. Haliczer, *The Comuneros of Castile: The Forging of a Revolution, 1475-1521* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981).

²⁹ Geraldine McKendrick, "The *Danza de la muerte* of 1520 and Social Unrest in Seville," *Journal of Hispanic Philology* 3 (1979): 239-60. Interestingly enough, Varela published Laredo's first medical treatise in the year following the *comunero* uprising.

³⁰ Any study of the origins of the *alumbrado* heresy makes it evident that every single person prosecuted in the wake of the Edict of Faith published in 1525 by the archbishop of Seville was a *converso* associated with the Franciscans, either as monk, nun, or tertiary. See Antonio Márquez, *Los alumbrados: Orígenes y filosofía (1525-1559)*, 2nd ed. (Madrid: Taurus, 1980), *passim*; and Alcalá, "María de Cazalla: The Grievous Price of Victory," in *Women in the Inquisition: Spain and the New World*, ed. Mary E. Giles (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 98-118.

³¹ The medical profession had primarily been associated with Jews before the expulsion, and a high proportion of the small number of practicing doctors in the early decades of the sixteenth century were *conversos*. María del Pila Rábade Obradó, "Los judeoconversos en la corte y en la época de los Reyes Católicos" (Ph.D. diss., Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1990), 469. Certain towns in the sixteenth century even record having to choose a *converso* doctor as the official doctor of the town because no Old Christian doctors lived in the area. Ruth Pike, *Aristocrats and Traders: Sevillian Society in the Sixteenth Century* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972), 87.

named explicitly by Laredo in an addendum to his mystical treatise in which he extols the curative properties of a prayer sequence, nearly half have *converso* origins, indicating that Laredo exercised a *converso* profession freely among the *converso* population of the province of Seville.³² In addition, Laredo evidently had *converso* friends, as he is on record as being executor of the estate of his publisher, Juan Cromburger, a man of German origins whose family intermarried regularly with *conversos*.³³

Laredo did not limit his interaction with the *converso* community to his medical practice, however, as his only explicit references to contemporary theologians and ecclesiastics in the pages of the *Subida* are to New Christians. Laredo requested several theologians to review his work before committing either edition of the *Subida* to print³⁴ and was also careful to ensure approval in the highest circles of Castilian ecclesiastics by at once dedicating his work to the existing archbishop of Seville and indicating at least passing acquaintance with the previous archbishop.³⁵ It is possible to identify that all four theologians and archbishops named by Laredo were high-ranking members of the Sevillian Inquisition and thus were the primary mediators of who was Christian and who was heretic in Seville in the 1520s and 1530s.³⁶ Archbishop

³² This fact can be proven from a comparison of his patient list (*Subida*, "Josephina," 892-97) with the several volumes by Juan Gil on Sevillian *conversos* (listed by last name and produced by tracking the descendants and spouses of New Christians who had been reconciled or executed in the first two decades of the Sevillian Inquisition). Juan Gil, *Los conversos y la Inquisición sevillana*, 8 vols. (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, Fundación El Monte, 2000-2003). For further details, see Boon, "Mystical Language of Recollection," 96-97, 103 n. 252.

³³ For Cromburger as a *converso*, see Gil, *Los conversos y la Inquisición sevillana*, 3:550-51. For Laredo as executor, and also as having given his publisher the gift of an expensive reliquary, see the inventory of Juan Cromburger's estate, published with several faulty notations in José Gestoso y Pérez, *Noticias inéditas de impresores sevillanos* (Seville: Gomez Hermanos, 1924), 74, 78. For corrections to the relevant sections, see the comments in Clive Griffin, *The Crombergers of Seville: The History of a Printing and Merchant Dynasty* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 110 n. 15.

³⁴ Unfortunately, we do not know the names of the theologians who approved the 1535 edition of the *Subida*. Laredo's medical works were also approved by panels of doctors, but although all but one have last names that appear on Gil's *converso* genealogies, none can be identified for certain. See the discussion in Boon, "Mystical Language of Recollection," 100.

³⁵ *Subida*, prefatory material, p. 23; on p. 25, Laredo indicates he was present at the death of the previous archbishop.

³⁶ Laredo names the theologians Antonio del Corro and Juan Fernández Temiño in *Subida*, pt. 3, chap. 1, p. 435. Both men were part of the court that tried Juan de Avila (denounced as a *converso* and an *alumbrado*, but acquitted). See the trial transcription in Sala Balust and Martín Hernández, "Biografía del Mtro. Juan de Avila," 51. As for the

Manrique, for example, made his reputation in part through publishing the first formal definition of the homegrown Spanish Illuminist or *alumbrado* heresy (associated primarily with Franciscan *conversos*), including as a main subject the *alumbrados*' putative rejection of the sacraments in the pursuit of an entirely interior religious experience.³⁷ All four theologians and bishops, however, are also immediately verifiable as *conversos* themselves, each with a historical record of protecting *conversos* (though not necessarily *alumbrados*) from the full threat of the Inquisition in which they exercised power.³⁸ Laredo thus seems to have intentionally positioned himself to receive the seal of orthodoxy for his mystical method by the Christian establishment as mediated by *conversos*, and *conversos* alone. This fact in no way detracts from the power of Laredo's work as a prescriptive method for achieving union with the Christian God—indeed, it makes a strong argument for further studies to catalog the political maneuvering to which certain New Christians resorted in order to live out their Christianity despite being constantly subject to suspicion.

I believe that it is safe to assume that Laredo's strategic appeal to theologians and ecclesiastics known to be favorable to *conversos* enabled him to avoid attracting Inquisitorial attention during his lifetime. Such tactics, however, do not explain the remarkable fact that his *Subida* was never questioned by the compilers of the *Indices of Prohibited Books* between 1559 and 1790, despite the generalized suspicion directed toward all spiritual works in the vernacular, including those written by Laredo's fellow recollection mystics.³⁹ Laredo's choice of rhetoric in certain portions of his mystical treatise cannot be properly evaluated if we

archbishops, Diego de Deza was archbishop of Seville from 1504 to 1523, and Alonso Manrique from 1523 to 1538. The archbishop was automatically a lead inquisitor.

³⁷ The full list of Manrique's condemned *alumbrado* propositions from 1525 can be found in Joseph Pérez, *Crónica de la Inquisición en España* (Barcelona: Ediciones Martínez, 2002), 125ff.

³⁸ Proof as to the *converso* heritage of the two members of the Inquisition can be found in the works that trace the original indictments of *conversos* in Seville and the records of their descendents. Corro is discussed in Claudio Guillén, "Un padrón de conversos sevillanos (1510)," *Bulletin Hispanique* 65 (1963): 78. Temiño is discussed in Gil, *Los conversos y la Inquisición sevillana*, 5:3850-56). Corro and Temiño were on the board that absolved Juan de Avila of charges of being both an *alumbrado* and a *converso*. See Sala Balust and Martín Hernández, "Biografía del Mtro. Juan de Avila," 19, 39-51. Likewise, both archbishops were known *conversos* who extended their protection to other New Christians. See Pike, *Aristocrats and Traders*, 54.

³⁹ See n. 5 above concerning the banning and expurgation of works by the other "founders" of recollection mysticism, Osuna and Palma. Works in the vernacular were more frequently proscribed than those in Latin, as can be seen in the fourteen standard

overlook the simple fact that he would have needed to prove his orthodoxy as a Christian to counteract a presumption of racially based heretical tendencies before even being considered for publication in the first place.⁴⁰

Strategizing for Success

Bernardino de Laredo was one of the foundational authors of the genre of *recogimiento*, a mystical genre that was short lived and indeed articulated only in Spain, yet proved influential to Spanish mystics of the Golden Age.⁴¹ According to the preface of the *Subida*, Laredo planned to guide his reader through three stages of meditation that he described as occurring over three weeks but actually intended to be practiced over years. The first stage or week consists of the pursuit of self-knowledge; the second of meditation on the Passion; and the final of the “re-collection” of the externally oriented powers of the soul, especially the loving will, toward an interior quiet union with God.⁴² The order and description of the three stages as detailed in the preface to the *Subida* seem to have served as the template for Melquiades Andrés’ standard definition of *recogimiento* as a general phenomenon.⁴³ Yet Andrés

rules accompanying the *Indices* of 1583 and thereafter. For more information, see J. M. de Bujanda, *Index de l’Inquisition espagnole, 1583, 1584* (Geneva: Droz, 1993), 68-74.

⁴⁰ The Franciscan authors of treatises on *recogimiento* had to work against the trend to identify their approach with that of the *dejamiento* (“letting go,” closer to quietism) advocated by the *alumbrados*. For the most thorough study of the first generation of the *alumbrado* heresy, see Márquez, *Los alumbrados*, passim; for an overview of the entire Illuminist movement in English, see Alastair Hamilton, *Heresy and Mysticism in Sixteenth-Century Spain: The Alumbrados* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1992), passim, including the relationship between *recogimiento* and *dejamiento*, 29-32.

⁴¹ The most complete treatment of this mystical method has been produced by Melquiades Andrés over the years, especially in Andrés, *Los recogidos*, passim.

⁴² *Subida*, “Notable,” 29-30.

⁴³ Andrés, *Los recogidos*, 89. It is thus curious that Laredo’s treatise is the only one of the foundational *recogimiento* treatises that actually delineates the three stages in the order provided in the overall definition. As far as I can tell, Andrés took Laredo’s treatise as the basis for his definition of *recogimiento*, as the *Subida* is the only work I know to actually conform to Andrés’ definition. Osuna, for example, places his meditation on the Passion as the first of his *Abecedarios espirituales*, rather than the second, while Palma does not ever discuss the Passion directly in the four stages of his *Via Spiritus*. Osuna, *Primer abecedario espiritual*, ed. José Juan Morcillo Pérez (Madrid: Editorial Cisneros, 2004), passim; Osuna, *Segundo abecedario espiritual*, ed. José Juan Morcillo Pérez (Madrid: Editorial Cisneros, 2004), passim. The most recent edition of the *Tercer abecedario* in Spanish is Osuna, *Tercer abecedario espiritual de Francisco de Osuna*, ed. Saturnino López Santidrián (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1998), with a somewhat loose translation to

himself seems relatively uninterested in the method as he defines it, for he devotes his magisterial work on recollection to the third stage of the method alone. Due to his focus on the final stage of *recogimiento*, all subsequent assessments of this mystical genre have likewise emphasized the final stage to such an extent that the first two stages are constantly passed over as preliminary.⁴⁴ A closer look at the second part of Laredo's treatise, however, indicates that the stage of Christ's humanity is anything but preliminary to seeking union with God.

The background to Laredo's decision to provide meditation on the Passion is found in the dramatic increase in lay devotion to the humanity of Christ (as infant, teacher, and sacrifice on the cross) that developed across Europe during the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. Treatises recommending imaginative visualization of the events of Christ's life and death, such as Ludolph of Saxony's *Vita Christi*, were among the best-sellers of the age, reaching audiences of laity and monastics alike.⁴⁵ The method of meditation involved envisioning oneself as a participant in the narrative of Christ's life, from cooing over the new-born infant to weeping while cradling Jesus' wounded body at the foot of the cross. This technique of meditation as visualized participation became particularly prevalent among Franciscans, whose attention had been directed to the power of the image of the suffering Christ by the visions and stigmatic experiences of their founder, Francis of Assisi.⁴⁶

I argue, however, that Laredo made intentional *political* use of his *mystical* interest in Passion meditation as a way to reinforce his ability to write as a Christian mystic despite his *converso* environment. This rhetorical move is found in the preface to his treatise, when Laredo states merely that he will provide a week of meditations on the Passion

be found in Osuna, *The Third Spiritual Alphabet*, trans. Mary E. Giles (New York: Paulist Press, 1981). See also Bernabé de Palma, *Via spiritus*, in *Via spiritus, Subida del Monte Sión*, ed. Teodoro H. Martín (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1998).

⁴⁴ Andrés himself follows previous scholarship. In the only monograph on Laredo to treat his complete corpus, Ros states: "[L]e moment est venu d'aborder la partie la plus importante du *Mont Sion*, c'est-à-dire le livre III." *Un inspirateur de Sainte Thérèse*, 120.

⁴⁵ The Castilian translation commissioned by Queen Isabel seems to have been the impetus for the production of numerous Passion meditation treatises by Castilian natives in the 1510s and 1520s. See Ludolph of Saxony, *Vita Christi cartujano*, trans. Ambrosio de Montesino (Álcala: Stanislau de Polonia, 1502-3), *passim*; see also my article, forthcoming in the *Sixteenth Century Journal*, discussing these early Passion treatises, "The Agony of the Virgin: The Swoons and Crucifixion of Mary in Sixteenth Century Castilian Passion Treatises."

⁴⁶ See Ewert H. Cousins, "Francis of Assisi: Christian Mysticism at the Crossroads," in *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 169-72.

in the second stage of his treatise, allowing his readers to assume that the second stage of his method includes only the narrative of the Passion:

Monday. From Gethsemane to Caiaphas.
 Tuesday. From Caiaphas to the column.
 Wednesday. From the column to the *ecce homo*.
 Thursday. From the *ecce homo* to the fall with the cross.
 Friday. From the fall to the nailing.
 Saturday. From the cross to the tomb.
 Sunday. From the tomb to the Resurrection.⁴⁷

This summary of the second level of his tripartite way leaves out the fact that only nineteen chapters (of sixty-five in the 1535 edition) actually narrate the events of Holy Week. In more than two-thirds of part 2, in fact, Laredo addresses the doctrines of Trinitarian theology, angelic cosmology, and Mariology. By highlighting the Passion narrative, and the Passion narrative alone, among the many complex concepts under consideration in the second stage of his treatise, Laredo used his introduction to consciously direct the attention of his readers (be they *converso* theologians, the general public, or modern scholars) to his focus on the Passion.

Yet Laredo does not acknowledge his medieval precedents explicitly, for he never mentions the name of the highly popular 1502 translation of Ludolph's *Vita Christi*, despite having cited the work in the "Josephina," an addendum to both editions of the *Subida*.⁴⁸ Nor, for that matter, does he refer to the recent Castilian works that limited the *Vita Christi* to a reenvisioning of the Passion alone.⁴⁹ In turning to the nineteen chapters dedicated to recounting Holy Week, it becomes evident that Laredo does not give equal weight to each scene, as was the custom. Instead, he passes over many of the events mentioned in the prefatory schema quite quickly, such as the fall with the cross,⁵⁰ while spending entire chapters on details such as the rope around Christ's neck or the medical

⁴⁷ *Subida*, "Notable," 30.

⁴⁸ See *Subida*, "Josephina," par. 23, p. 882.

⁴⁹ The early modern Castilian Passion treatises that reached the most editions in the sixteenth century were the anonymous *Fasciculus myrrhe: El qual trata de la passion de nuestro redemptor Jesu Christo* (Seville: Juan Varela de Salamanca, 1524; originally published, 1511); and Francisco Tenorio and Luis de Escobar's *Passio duorum* (Seville: Juan Varela de Salamanca, 1539; originally published, 1524).

⁵⁰ For example, the fall with the cross, described in the preface as the ending point of Thursday's meditation and the beginning point on Friday, takes place in a few lines of chap. 20, p. 274.

and theological bases for the possibility of Christ actually having sweated blood in Gethsemane.⁵¹ By suggesting in the prefatory material that the narrative itself paralleled the popular medieval and new Castilian treatises on the technique of Passion meditation, Laredo implies a traditionalism about his material that serves to mask the originality of part 2 of his *Subida*.

I do not wish to suggest that Laredo's interest in Passion meditation was entirely political. Rather, as I will detail below, his reformulation of the technique is fundamental for his prescriptive method for reaching mystical union, a method which would have had great resonance with a readership of Sevillans during the decades of the development of confraternal processions during Holy Week. I think it is clear, however, that Laredo, as a Franciscan mystic who associated with *conversos*, was fully aware of the difficulty of being allowed a voice by his fellow citizens and by the Inquisition. I suggest that for authors like Laredo, the option to speak—indeed, to publish—as a *Christian* depended on using rhetorical devices to emphasize *non-Jewishness*. The emphasis on the somatic nature of God, the need to accept a past (not future) Messiah figure, the contrast with the blood taboo in Judaism, the memory of centuries of persecution during Holy Week as the accused “killers of Christ”—these elements would all have combined to make the crucifixion particularly problematic to one whose immediate background included Jewish beliefs and practices.⁵² Although he negotiated his right to publish during his lifetime by appealing to *converso* theologians for approval, only by out-Christianing the Old Christians on the specific subject of Christ's humanity did Laredo manage to publish a treatise on mystical union that could survive repeated Inquisitorial review of vernacular religious writings over the centuries.

Modern Categories of Spirituality

Laredo's use of Passion meditation in part 2 is far more complex than he had signaled it to be in his preface. His incorporation of visual meditation as central rather than preparatory to his mystical method went against the medieval and early modern intellectual tradition that valued abstract contemplation of God as the most advanced method to attain mystical union with an unembodied divinity. As mentioned above, most

⁵¹ *Subida*, pt. 2, chap. 22, pp. 279-82; chap. 17, pp. 262-65.

⁵² My thanks to Jodi Bilinkoff for directing my attention to this point.

major theologians considered visualizations of the narrative of Jesus' life to be at best props for novices who had not yet learned to deny the power of the external senses of the body.⁵³ Scholars of mysticism have tended to take their cue from the claims of the medieval contemplatives for the modern categorizations of devotional works into either beginning texts on imaginative meditation or advanced texts on abstract mystical contemplation.

For example, Bernard McGinn, in his magisterial work on the history of Western Christian mysticism, dismisses the Franciscan focus on imaginative meditation as preliminary to true mysticism: "I would suggest, however, that such intense pictorial realizations of the events of Christ's life should be seen as belonging more to the preparation for a direct and often non-pictorial consciousness of identification with Christ, both human and divine, at the summit of the mystical path, than as constituting its core."⁵⁴ McGinn's argument may serve to describe a number of mystical methods; indeed, it is not directly contradicted even by Bonaventure, given his choice to separate his writings on the life of Christ from his guides to contemplation.⁵⁵ Laredo, however, successfully integrates the medieval technique of chronological meditation on the Passion of Christ as *pivotal* to a mystical method modeled on the medieval model of purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways.⁵⁶ I argue that Laredo's integration of Christ's bleeding body as the "core" of the *Subida del Monte Sión* brings the universality of McGinn's claim into question.

Laredo deliberately set his visualization technique in opposition to the beginnings of the tradition of public Holy Week processions by confraternities that followed a *via crucis* mapped onto the streets of Seville.⁵⁷

⁵³ Michelle Karnes outlines the history of the scholastic theologians' collective disdain of meditation on the life of Christ in "'The School of Devotion': Meditations on Christ and the Construction of Lay Piety" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2004).

⁵⁴ Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism, 1200-1350*; vol. 3, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroads, 1998), 59. He is arguing against Ewert Cousins's proposal of the category of "mysticism of the historical event." See Cousins, "Francis of Assisi," 166-67.

⁵⁵ Despite Franciscan attention to the humanity of Christ, the deeply Christological Bonaventure published his works on the "life of Christ" separately from his introductions to mystical technique, such as *De triplica via*. Cf. the *Tree of Life* in Bonaventure: "The Soul's Journey into God," "The Tree of Life," "The Life of St. Francis," trans. Ewert H. Cousins (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1978), 119-75; cf. "Las tres vias," 102-40.

⁵⁶ Laredo added this Bonaventurian terminology to the 1538 revision of his treatise. See *Subida*, pt. 3, chap. 1, p. 435.

⁵⁷ The Holy Week processions in Spain began to take their current form (confraternities of penitents processing the Stations of the Cross along the public thoroughfares

In contrast to the drama and externality of a physical re-creation of the route to Calvary, Laredo asks his readers not to journey to Palestine mentally, but to imagine their own bodies *as* the Holy Land: "And you will be the Holy Land if you know how to enclose yourself and be joyful."⁵⁸ He recommends that devotees, rather than envisioning themselves as travelers, envision the Passion transcribed onto their own souls and bodies. The mystic should imagine his or her heart as the column to which Jesus is tied under torture, receiving the tail end of the blows of the whip.⁵⁹ Alternatively, Laredo recommends that the mystic's heart become the material base of the cross, inundated with the blood dripping from Christ's wounds.⁶⁰ Laredo's focus on the heart, often a synonym for the soul, as the physical site of the torture and crucifixion of Christ is thus at once both thoroughly bodily and thoroughly interior.

I read Laredo's rewriting of this popular meditative technique as transforming it from an external, beginning device into an internalizing method of spirituality. In contradistinction to Andrés' assumption that the third stage of the technique of *recogimiento* can stand alone without further reference, Laredo's Passion narrative of the heart in fact falls naturally into place as central to his mystical method.⁶¹ In the first

of their cities and towns, wearing special robes and carrying gigantic statues of Jesus and Mary) in the 1520s in Seville and during the first half of the sixteenth century across Castile in general. The first confraternal processions in Seville can be dated to the decade of Laredo's burgeoning interest in spirituality: in 1521 a local nobleman returned from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and worked out a *camino de la cruz* from the door of his palace to the "Humilladero de la Cruz del Campo." José Sánchez Herrero, *Semana Santa de Sevilla* (Madrid: Sílex, 2003), 68. The Semana Santa processions continue to this day to be the hallmark of Spanish Christian religiosity.

⁵⁸ "E tú serás Tierra Sancta si te sabes encerrar e gozar. . . ." *Subida*, pt. 2, chap. 13, p. 253.

⁵⁹ "[P]ensando en sus açotes sea tu corazón columna; de manera que de golpe o recudida no puedas sentir ni pensar en algún açote o golpe que no toque en tu columna, e porque es de piedra dura insensible no se sabe deshazer en tan digna compasión. . . ." *Subida*, pt. 2, chap. 13, p. 252.

⁶⁰ "E si piensas en la cruz, sea tu corazón la piedra en que fue hincada e aun lo más tierno e interior sea el agujero de ella, de manera que la sangre que corre por el madero lave tu dura substancia y se entre en el cordial agujero e nunca salga de allí." *Subida*, pt. 2, chap. 13, p. 252. There may be a play on words such that the heart and the spine (*columna*) of the mystic are interchangeable with the *columna* to which Christ was tied during the beating.

⁶¹ Further evidence for the fact that such "preliminary" meditation is fully functional in a mystical technique can be found in the fact that Laredo struggles openly with his language in part 2, the classic mystic's difficulty associated with the impossibility of rendering an infinite God into finite human language. In the prologue to part 2, Laredo

stage, Laredo recommends focusing on gaining awareness of the self as mere dust and ashes for the soul to achieve complete annihilation in comparison to its infinite creator God. In the final stage, on the other hand, he posits an interior quiet union through love with a God identified as residing in the soul's interior. In between the negated self and union with God come most of the contents of part 2—Trinitarian theology, the Passion, angelology, and Mariology—which serve to define the God with whom the annihilated self is uniting in part 3. I argue that Laredo's presentation of Christ's Passion mapped onto the human heart is in fact the critical location for a spiritual journey that begins with awareness of the self as utterly distant and distinct from God and ends with an identification of God as seated in and united with the soul.

It is therefore impossible to realize the coherent rationale underlying Laredo's tripartite mystical method, if, following McGinn's definition of mysticism or Andrés' definition of recollection, we dismiss the second stage of Laredo's method as preliminary simply because it includes a focus on the narrative of Christ's death. I suggest that Laredo is unique in the history of mysticism through the sixteenth century for his resolution of the perennial disjunction between the popular (yet overly external) spirituality concerning the suffering Christ and the abstract (and requiring extensive education) methods of mystical contemplation. Of course, we do have many records of mystical experience that seem to be a direct result of meditation on the Passion from such figures as Angela of Foligno, Julian of Norwich, Heinrich Suso, and others. In terms of prescriptive guides to meditation in which the author does not attempt to derive authority from his or her personal experiences, however, Laredo's *Subida* is the only treatise of which I am aware that designates Passion meditation as the central stage of a unitive method.

Thus, this internalizing Passion meditation technique should be of great interest to historians of Christianity as an example of a mystical guide that crosses historically conceived categories of meditation versus contemplation. That Laredo's treatise has not received the treatment it is due by historians of mysticism, however, seems to be the result of their uncomplicated acceptance of Laredo's problematic presentation of his tripartite way in his preface, a preface that I indicated was actually intended to mediate the tension between a *converso* environment and Christian mystical interests. In the end, scholarly attention to *converso*

admits that "confieso . . . ser vergüença e confusión osar yo hablar en esto con tan flaco fundamento y tan bronco corazón." *Subida*, prohemio to pt. 2, p. 187.

status for only those individuals attracted to crypto-Judaism limits our ability to read between the lines for the social pressures surrounding the publication of works in the age of the Inquisition, a limitation that has resulted in modern scholars issuing readings of mystical techniques that reproduce the assumptions of the Golden Age inquisitors.

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